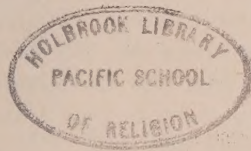


CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN
EUROPEAN CHURCHES

from the Desk for Documentation concerning Eastern European Churches

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Introduction

This number of "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" specially illustrates two themes:

First the keen interest of the churches of Eastern Europe in the efforts of Christians of all countries to achieve unity in confessing their common Lord, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the reports on the anti-religious movements in the USSR show how anxious organised atheism is to justify itself, in its complete rejection of religion. Non-religious ethics want to try to prove their own superiority to religious ethics.

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CHURCH NEWS : U.S.S.R.

Events in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1960

"Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate", No 1, 1961

1. "The year 1960 in the Russian Orthodox Church was marked by a deepening and spreading of Christian unity. It opened with a strengthening of its contacts with the World Council of Churches."

In December 1959 (says the Journal) some of the leaders of the World Council of Churches, including its General Secretary, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, were the guests of His Holiness, Patriarch Alexius, in the USSR.

The Journal then quotes from the conversations between the Patriarch and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No. 1, 1960)

The Journal comments: "It was in a spiritual atmosphere, filled with creative endeavour, that the year 1959 with its wealth of events drew to a close. The Russian Orthodox Christians could thank God for crowning this year of grace" ...

"In face of the tremendous tensions which exist all over the world, the Christian Church has continued on its way, the way to which Christ's disciples in every land were called by the apostle with a single hope, to be 'worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:2-3)."

"This way is not in the political sphere and does not directly affect it. But it helps to cast light on the secular atmosphere in which people have to live, as Dr. Visser 't Hooft explained: 'Our visit to the Holy Orthodox Church of Russia has no political purpose. Nevertheless the very fact that personal contacts have been established in a spirit of friendship and Christian understanding is an important contribution to better international relations'."

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2. According to the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate the next great event in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church was the 14th February 1961, the fifteenth anniversary of the Patriarch's tenure of office as head of the Orthodox Church. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God", the Journal continues.

"Every day, with every sunrise, this call from God awakens our hearts. The bloodless sacrifice celebrated every day in the Church constantly reminds us to think of the redemption of the whole world through the life-giving blood of Christ."

These are the opening words of a pastoral letter sent out by the Patriarch ten years ago. Since then the figure of Patriarch Alexius, the peacemaker, has become clear in all its force, its spirituality and its humanity.

"Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matth. 16:18). "A national church must from time to time be lifted up to heaven, and from time to time be sunk to the abyss. Sometimes it is guided by the power of Christ, and sometimes it is carried away by the waves of passion and almost submerged, but thanks to its faith it regains the surface. It is the Patriarch's task to preserve the Church from sinking, and to keep the light of the Spirit burning within it. It is a task which requires him to be always on the watch ..."

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3. The Journal then gives the most important occasions attended by the Patriarch during the past year, culminating in the meeting between the Patriarch and the Orthodox churches of Egypt and the Near Eastern countries, Constantinople and Athens (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No. 1, 1961). There follows an enumeration of the services and festivals celebrated during 1960 by Patriarch Alexius, most of which were attended by guests from the Russian Orthodox Exarchates in Europe and North America, by the heads of the ancient Orthodox churches in the Near East, and by Christians of other confessions. Special mention is made of visits from churchmen from the USA and Canada.

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4. The Journal then recalls the pastoral letter sent by the Patriarch at Easter to the churches affiliated to his Patriarchate, closing with the words, "May we be spiritually enlightened by the tremendous event of Easter Day, and through the power of the resurrection let us forgive all who hate us."

The Journal goes on to quote a pastoral letter sent by the Patriarch to the members of his Exarchate in North and South America: "As occupant of the Throne of the Church of Holy Russia, the blessed country of our fathers and forefathers, I send you the blessing of your mother-church, which kindled the light of Holy Orthodoxy in present-day America through its apostolic mission." The Patriarch added that "the clergy and members of the Exarchate are loyal citizens of the USA, Canada and other American countries, and that the relations of their churches to the Moscow Patriarchate are strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Canon Laws of the Russian Orthodox Church, and are therefore purely ecclesiastical in character."

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5. The Journal then mentions the Patriarch's letter to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting at St. Andrews, Scotland, in August 1960, in which he assured the Committee that "his church was attentively following the efforts for Christian unity undertaken by the World Council of Churches, in obedience to the words of the Apostle: 'Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). We rejoice that the World Council of Churches regards it as its primary task to promote unanimity and cooperation between the Christian churches in overcoming the great distress among mankind ... Undertaken in a spirit of Christian love, this activity (on the part of the World Council of Churches) will gradually lead to that

foundation which will bring Christians closer together, and to that power which finally will help Christians to achieve their real brotherhood and unity in Christ." The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate quotes some sentences from the answer received from the Central Committee, also based on Ephesians 4:13.

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6. There follows a short report on the Peace Assembly organised by the Moscow Soviet in the Kremlin theatre. At this occasion the Patriarch quoted in his speech the Prophet Isaiah and underlined that "the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Church are the original source of the idea of world peace, which in view of the constant increase of dangerous lethal weapons must be recognised as the most important idea for mankind today."

* * *

7. The Patriarch's journeys took him also to Georgia (Tbilissi) and from there (accompanied by Ephrem, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of Georgia) on to the holy place of Etshmiadzin, and other sanctuaries of the Armenian Church. From here the Moscow Patriarch, the Catholicos of all the Armenians, Vasgen I, and the Catholicos of Georgia, Ephrem, sent a telegram to N.S. Khrushchev, President of the USSR, expressing their thanks for his efforts to ensure peace at the fifteenth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The telegram includes the sentence: "The heads of the Christian Church pray to God without ceasing for world peace, that He may bring peace to the nations."

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8. The Journal then describes the inductions of higher clergy appointed by Patriarch Alexius, including the consecration of Archimandrite Nikodim (Rotov) as Bishop of Podol'sk (today of Jaroslav and Rostov). In addition Bishop Nikodim holds the position of President of the Foreign Department of the Church in Moscow (in succession to Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsy and Kolomna).

One important event was also the establishment of an Exarchate in Central Europe (Berlin), with Bishop John (Wendland) as its head.

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9. On the 43rd anniversary of the Great October Revolution, the Patriarch, Metropolitan Pitirim and Bishop Pimen (administrator of the Inner-Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate) attended a reception organised in the Kremlin at Moscow by the authorities.

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10. The Journal reports on the meetings between Archbishop Jakovos (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople) of North and South America, Metropolitan Antonios and Metropolitan Elias (Patriarchate of Antioch), Archbishop Orest of Carpathian Russia (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), the Metropolitan of the Roumanian Orthodox Church and the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. Mention is also made of the contacts started by the Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Boris in New York, with the National Council of Churches of Christ in North America.

Reference is also made to the visit of a delegation of five monks from the Moscow Patriarchate to England (London, Canterbury, Coventry, York, Oxford, Windsor and the Abbey of Kelham, Nashdom, etc.). In London the Russian visitors attended a solemn service in Westminster Abbey, and were afterwards received by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace.

The visits of Russian church leaders and theologians to the German Democratic Republic were preceded by similar visits to France, where they met Pastor Marc Boegner (President of the French Protestant Church Association) and others. On the way back from Paris, Bishop Nikodim and his companion S. Buevsky (Secretary of the Church's Foreign Department in Moscow) stopped in Geneva for talks with Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (General Secretary of the World Council of Churches) and other members of its staff. They visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches and also the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva. They took the opportunity of seeing Bishop Emilianos, the permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to the World Council of Churches. Bishop Nikodim conducted a service in the chapel of the local Russian Orthodox Church in Geneva.

The Journal then gives a list of the numerous visits to the USSR of foreign churchmen of the Anglican Church, the French Reformed Church, the Church of Lebanon, several Orthodox churches of Western Europe, Czechoslovakia, etc.

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11. An important date was the 28th August 1960, when at the suggestion of the Patriarch a Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church for Relations between Christians was formed, consisting of the following members:

Metropolitan Pitirim of Leningrad	(today Metropolitan of Krutitsi and Kolomna), President,
Bishop Nikodim	(director of the Foreign Department of the Church),
Bishop Pimen	(administration of the Moscow Patriarchate Church),
Bishop John of Berlin	(Exarch of Central Europe),
Bishop Sergius of Belgorod	
Professor V.M. Borovoy	
Professor K.I. Rushitzky	
Professor Uspensky (Leningrad)	

* * *

12. In 1960 representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate attended a number of inter-church conferences, some of which were important for the rapprochement between Russian Orthodoxy and the churches in the West. It also attended the Christian Peace Conference at Prague, the meetings of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and of its Faith and Order Commission at St. Andrews, Scotland, the European Ecumenical Youth Assembly at Lausanne, and the Second Conference of European Churches at Nyborg. At all these conferences the representatives of the Russian Church received an extremely cordial welcome.

The Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the last plenary session
of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches

The "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" (No. 12, 1960) contains a long report on the plenary session of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches at St. Andrews, Scotland, written by Professor Vitaly Borovoy and Professor Vasily Stoikov, both teaching at that time at the Leningrad Theological Academy.

The names of many of the leading personalities who attended the conference at St. Andrews are printed in heavy type. A short account is also given of some of their remarks on the themes dealt with at the conference. For instance Bishop Oliver Tomkins, "Faith and Order must take part in the many forms of daily work of the World Council of Churches"; Dr. Blake, "Faith and Order must exercise influence on the anticipated integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council; Dr. Visser 't Hooft, "Faith and Order has always striven for church unity through the obedience of the separate churches to the Holy Spirit ... Faith and Order was and is the basic task of the World Council of Churches"; Professor Florovsky (Orthodox Church, USA), "who briefly but clearly exposed the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the questions under discussion".

The report concludes with two opinions expressed by the first "official" observers sent by the Moscow Patriarchate. Professor V. Borovoy said he was glad to have an opportunity to speak at a meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, where a great many interesting things had been said. "Our Church will make use of the conference documents to study the work of Faith and Order".

Professor Borovoy remarked that "the problems under discussion must be divided into two categories. The first category consists of questions which are purely theological and theoretical, and which have less influence on the immediate tasks of the World Council of Churches. They are useful on the academic plane and must therefore be studied further. But this should not make the Commission lose sight of the second category, namely the essential, important, practical problems which all Christians have to face. In this category there are especially four difficult problems which should be solved as quickly as possible:

1. The problem of the Apostolic Succession
2. The problem of the ministry of the Church (hierarchy)
3. The Sacraments
4. The nature of the Church".

In conclusion the report says: "The meetings of the Faith and Order Commission were marked by an atmosphere of soberness. All the participants had equal rights to express their views freely, and were modest and uninhibited in their relations with one another, whatever their rank or position. Furthermore, during the sessions, and also in the views expressed by the individual speakers, the questions dealt with were sometimes so simple and clear, questions which were solved long ago in the history of the undivided Church, that it was unnecessary to analyse and discuss them; in fact doing so only made the question of Christian reunion more obscure and complicated. Too much time was

often spent on organisational or technical problems, on questions of style or the formulation of certain phrases, on discussion of the best philosophical, theological, psychological or sociological reasons for every expression and every form of Christianity today. However interesting such discussions may be, they distract the attention from the immediate task of the Faith and Order Commission. This may perhaps also explain why the essential points of divergence between the churches were not discussed at all at St. Andrews, excepting the problem of tradition, and for this no solution was found."

"However, the Faith and Order meetings at St. Andrews were very important for the future of Faith and Order, because they marked the end of the preparatory stage in the preparations for the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held at New Delhi in December 1961. Decisions will then be taken on all the above questions, which are of such fundamental importance for the cause of Christian unity."

The Russian Orthodox Church on C.C.I.A.

The "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" (No. 12, 1960), which appeared at the end of February 1961, contains a report on the Plenary Session of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, at St. Andrews, Scotland, 16-24 August, 1960.

The report is signed by Professor A.F. Shishkin, and gives the following information:

The big meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at St. Andrews was prepared by several different Commissions, including the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, described this preparatory work as a sort of kitchen where the documents are carefully considered and drawn up for discussion by the Central Committee (although, of course, the resolutions of the Central Committee are not 'cooked' in advance!)

The meetings of the C.C.I.A. were attended by two members of the Russian Orthodox Church: Professor A.F. Shishkin (Leningrad) and V.S. Alexeev (rapporteur of the Foreign Department of the Church in Moscow).

The documents for this preparatory meeting had been prepared in good time. "Altogether the organisation of the conference deserves the highest praise, and in this the participants heartily concurred".

Professor Shishkin's report gives a résumé of the history and membership of the C.C.I.A., with the names of its leaders and the addresses of its main offices. He remarks, "The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs is, so to speak, the Foreign Department of the World Council of Churches."

"When asked whether the C.C.I.A. is dependent upon any governmental authority, we were told that the World Council of Churches is absolutely independent of any governmental authority or political party", writes Professor Shishkin.

The churches which are members of the World Council of Churches are living under widely differing social and political systems. "Their members are living under political-economic conditions which are diametrically opposed to one another. It is the task of the World Council of Churches to maintain Christian confessional contacts between the churches, and to remind Christian people all over the world that loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ as founder of the Christian Church takes precedence over all other considerations."

After enumerating the separate items on the agenda at St. Andrews Professor Shishkin notes: "The warm welcome accorded to our delegation and the constant attention we received greatly helped us to feel quite at home at St. Andrews, so that we could take active part in the C.C.I.A. meetings."

Among the questions discussed at St. Andrews, the Russians were interested mainly in general human problems such as "Peace and Security", "Food and Population-increase", "African Problems", and "The Theological Implications of Christian world-wide Action in International Affairs". The solution of these problems is important if war is to be prevented.

"It was interesting for us observers from the Russian Orthodox Church, which as is well known takes a firm position on these questions, to hear what the representatives of the ecumenical movement had to say about them."

The resolution passed by the conference mentioned the measures proposed by the governments of the countries in the East and the West which are conducive to relieving the international tension. This resolution states that the relations between the Communist states and those in the West have become extremely strained and that the international situation - although it has not altered in principle since the Berlin crisis and since the exchange of visits between the Eastern and Western leaders - is more dangerous today than ever, especially since the failure of the Summit Conference and possibly also since the end of the Korean war.

Professor Shishkin goes on to quote the recommendations made by the C.C.I.A. Conference for overcoming the impasse in the negotiations about disarmament, and creating a situation in which general disarmament can be brought about, or at least the necessary negotiations for it.

In addition the C.C.I.A. called for the cessation of nuclear weapons testing in order to strengthen mutual confidence between the nations.

The Russian observers were very interested in the discussion on help to under-developed countries, writes Professor Shishkin, and in the discussion on the population-explosion.

"Hungry people are knocking at the doors of the Christian churches in the West. In the Soviet Union the religious organisations no longer have to worry about the creation of good conditions for the workers. The State takes care of all that. In the West the churches sometimes have to tackle these questions, and we saw at St. Andrews that the churches in the West are really worried about these problems..."

In the discussion which followed (writes Professor Shishkin) the need for coordinating the efforts being made by different countries was again stressed. For it is only through joint efforts that positive results can be obtained. "The C.C.I.A. is doing its utmost to encourage effective solutions, instead of palliatives."

"In the near future the World Council of Churches will tackle a number of long-term projects, through the C.C.I.A., the purpose of which is to raise the standard of living of the under-developed peoples. This includes training local leaders in order to develop agriculture and industry, granting scholarships to young Christians who volunteer for service abroad, etc."

"The C.C.I.A. has pronounced itself unanimously in favour of support for the peoples of Africa in their struggle for national independence, and has expressly welcomed the new young states of Africa. The C.C.I.A. has definitely rejected all forms of "apartheid" as incompatible with the Gospel (referring to the statement made by the Evanston Assembly in 1954)."

In conclusion he sums up as follows: "We parted from the members of the C.C.I.A. with the most cordial feelings and exchanged best wishes. As we left Scotland we felt deep gratitude towards the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Visser 't Hooft, for the good reception given to our delegation. Our practical conclusions were as follows:

1. The work of the C.C.I.A. can only be described as satisfactory and useful.
2. Through its advocacy of peace, through its utmost efforts in favour of disarmament, to stop nuclear weapons experiments, to solve international questions by peaceful methods, to promote peaceful co-existence between states with different social-economic and political structures, to develop cooperation between East and West, and to support the national independence and development of the countries formerly under colonial rule, the World Council of Churches is making a positive contribution to decrease the international tension and to promote world peace.
3. Concerning the theological basis of its work, at its present stage the ecumenical movement is trying to keep the Christian conscience free from tendentious political passions (which often coloured it in the past and prevented Western Christians from forming contacts with the Orthodox Churches in the Socialist states).
4. The friendly attitude to the Russian Orthodox Church, and the attempt not only to understand the nature of Orthodox doctrine, but also to participate to some extent in the wealth of its inheritance, create favourable conditions for the development of friendly relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches in future."

The Russian Orthodox Patriarchate presents a valuable collection of books to the World Council of Churches

Four representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate paid in February 1961 a four-day visit to World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva, in a series of "get-acquainted" meetings started in 1958.

The delegation was headed by Bishop Nikodim of Jaroslav and Rostov, head of the Department of Foreign Church Relations of the Patriarchate; and included Professor Borovoy, vice-chairman of the Department; Alex Buevsky, Department secretary and Victor Alexeev, consultant for foreign church relations.

The delegation brought with it a valuable collection of books on the Russian Orthodox Church for the library of the World Council of Churches. The World Council had earlier sent books to the libraries of the Patriarchate and its Zagorsk and Leningrad theological academies.

Annual report on theological statistics

The curriculum for theological students in the USSR is fixed by the Education Committee of the Holy Synod. This Committee reports that in 1960 43 young men graduated from the theological academies of Moscow and Leningrad, after "successfully completing the fourth course of the Theological College".

The graduates from the academy at Moscow included one Lebanese, two Roumanians and one Pole. At the same time two foreign students from the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia completed their theological studies at Leningrad. "The other 36 graduates are now working as local clergy in different parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church."

Last year a number of academic degrees were also conferred with the approval of Patriarch Alexius. A.I. Iwanov, Professor at Leningrad Theological Academy, obtained a Doctorate in Church History for his thesis on "The History of the Church of Byzantium". Professor K.I. Rushitzky, Dean of Moscow Theological Academy, received the Degree of Master of Theology in recognition of his "Introduction to Ethical Theology" (for the last semester of the Theological Seminary). And M.M. Lebedev received the academic Degree of Master of Theology for his book of instruction in the Latin language for the use of religious schools in the USSR.

Metropolitan Gury of Leningrad and Ladoga was elected as an honorary member of the Leningrad Theological Academy.

The Holy Synod's Committee on Pensions made a number of decisions concerning pensions to priests who had become old and incapacitated. Pensions are also paid to the widows and orphans of priests.

Lastly the report states that the "Committee for Restoration Work on Churches" has agreed to restore one of the oldest monuments of Russian architecture - the "Church of the Holy Spirit" in the Troitse-Sergieva Monastery near Moscow, and other buildings attached to this ancient monastery.

Russian Orthodox Church applies for membership
in World Council of Churches

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has applied for membership in the World Council of Churches.

His Holiness Patriarch Alexis, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, sent the formal application for membership to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft.

It will be acted on early in the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches scheduled to begin in New Delhi, India, November 18th, 1961.

The Church of Russia has expressed its agreement with the basis for membership. Churches in the Council "accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour".

Replying to questions Dr. Visser 't Hooft said that the application can be seen as an act of faith in the World Council of Churches and its present members for several reasons.

The application for membership from the Russian Church is the culmination of consultations dating back to the days before the World Council was actually constituted in 1948.

The most important step to closer contact took place in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in August, 1958, when three representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church met a delegation from the World Council of Churches. The representatives agreed on an exchange of visits between the World Council and the Russian Church.

In 1959 two representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate spent a month in Geneva, Switzerland, at the headquarters of the World Council and attended the meeting of the Central Committee on the Island of Rhodes, Greece (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No 1, 1960).

Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, on invitation of the Patriarch, led an international delegation from the World Council staff on a visit to churches in the USSR in December, 1959. The delegation visited Russian Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, and Armenian churches (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No 1, 1960).

The year 1960 saw a number of observers from the Russian Orthodox Church at ecumenical meetings. They attended the Faith and Order Commission, the Executive Committee of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and the World Council of Churches Central Committee meeting in St. Andrews, Scotland, in August. In July delegates of the Patriarchal Church attended the European Ecumenical Youth Assembly at Lausanne, Switzerland.

The head of the Patriarchate's Department of Foreign Church Relations, Bishop Nikodim, paid visits to Geneva to the World Council in November, 1960 and February, 1961.

The letter of application signed by Patriarch Alexis, refers to "problems of mutual rapprochement between all Christians, the deepening of mutual understanding among divided Christians and the strengthening of universal brotherhood, love, and peace among the nations on the basis of the Gospel".

"In this respect we count on the efforts made by the World Council of Churches to strengthen the spirit of ecumenical brotherhood as well as the contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church", the letter says. It says the Russian Orthodox Church "has not only always prayed and continues to pray for the welfare of the Holy Churches of God and the union of all" but is "fully determined to make her contribution to the great task of Christian unity on the lines of the previous movements of Faith and Order, Life and Work, and International Friendship through the Churches which now find their common expression in the different forms and aspects of the World Council of Churches".

In making its application, the Church lists 30,000 priests and 73 bishoprics inside the USSR. There are 20,000 parishes and 40 monasteries. The eight theological schools maintained by the Church include two academies and six seminaries.

Why are churches restored?

An answer to this question is given by N. Jablotshkina (Mauka i Religia, No 10, 1960, an atheist paper).

Many churches and convents are magnificent architectural monuments. Up to the seventeenth century, churches were the only public buildings in Russia and in their inner and outer form the perfection of Russian architecture could be brought to expression.

Already in the first years of the Soviet regime, W.I. Lenin ordered that the monuments of Russian architecture, including church buildings were to be carefully preserved. This order of Lenin is the basis of the present Russian law.

"The restoration of ancient churches as valuable architectural monuments is the duty of the State, which carries it out at its own expense. The work involved is one of scientific reconstruction. Our architects spend many hours in the archives in the hope of finding exact and detailed information on how the churches were built."

"The restoration of old church buildings is entrusted to state organisations, which take upon themselves the responsibility of preserving them from further ruin."

The unity of the children of God

The latest number of "Bratsky Vestnik" (organ of the All-Unionist Association of Baptists and Gospel-Christians in the USSR) recalls the union between Baptists, Gospel-Christians and Pentecostals in 1945, and expresses its support of the idea of Christian unity.

"Our union entitles us to equal rights as members of our Association, which makes no distinction between children and step-children; it regards all as children of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our union was not formed so that we should criticise one another's beliefs, but so that we should unanimously praise him who suffered for us, and redeemed us from sin, and sent us the Holy Spirit to lead us to unity. This unity of ours is observed every year in all the churches belonging to our Association as the Day of Christian Unity, a sign of Christ's prayer for the unity of those who live in a common faith in him. A fragment of this unity has been brought about.

"The prophet Isaiah speaks emphatically of this joy of the children of God (9:2): 'Thou hast multiplied the nation, Thou hast increased its joy; they rejoice before Thee'. Peter also writes (I Peter 1:8): 'You rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy'. May Christ's prayer 'that they all may be one' echo, therefore, in our hearts today. Let us pray that our unity may continue and spread. Let us pray for our united churches, that the Lord may always cleanse us from all that could mar our unity, so that with the armour of faith, joined in friendship as one family, we may work for Him as God's people - for Him who loved us, even unto death on the cross."

Baptist Centenary

The Latvian Baptists and Gospel-Christians (reports the latest number 5/6 of the publication of the All Unionist Association of Baptists and Gospel Christians) recently celebrated their centenary.

The Latvian branch of the Association is under the direction of N.A. Levindanto. The jubilee celebrations were attended by representatives of the Estonian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian brotherhoods as well as by the president of the Association in Moscow, Mr. J.I. Shidkov and his son.

Quotations from the jubilee report:

Brother Lauber, an old leading member of the Latvian brotherhood:
"For seventy years I have been a member of the Christian Church and during my long life in its service nothing has happened that I have to regret."

J.I. Shidkov: "From the small mustardseed (in Latvia) a large tree has grown under whose branches more than 7,000 of the Latvian brotherhood meet today. Today we are filled with the feeling that we ought to build a monument like Samuel and say with Samuel: 'The Lord has helped us'."

From among the numerous greetings telegrams from abroad let us quote here the greetings from Latvian Baptists abroad: "The branch greets the tree. Let us grow in spirit for God, nation and homeland."

Mr. Shidkov's report on
Ecumenical Youth Conference in Europe, July 1960

"Bratsky Vestnik", the organ of the All Unionist Association of Baptists and Gospel Christians in the USSR (No 5/6, 1960, issued in March 1961) gives a report by Mr. M.I. Shidkov, son of the president of the above Association, on the Ecumenical Youth Conference in Europe held at Lausanne in 1960.

"On the return flight from Rio de Janeiro, where the tenth Baptist World Congress had taken place", writes Mr. Shidkov, "I was to stop at Lausanne, not as a delegate but as an observer for the Baptists in the USSR."

"On July 15th, I landed at Geneva airport in its picturesque setting and immediately proceeded to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, where I was received in a very friendly manner by the General Secretary, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft; he told me with satisfaction that four other youth representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church had already arrived (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No 4, 1960). Dr. Visser 't Hooft told me how very happy he was that young Christians from the Soviet Union were able to attend the Lausanne Conference."

"Dr. Visser 't Hooft also expressed the hope that the Russian Baptists would send representatives to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi at the end of 1961."

"I thanked the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches for his very kind welcome and went on to Lausanne. It is difficult to describe the beauty of this wonderful town."

Mr. Shidkov then describes the Ecumenical Youth Conference and the themes and problems studied there. "I had numerous discussions with the participants between the meetings. All were greatly interested in church life in the USSR ... and were happy to receive detailed answers to their questions from the representatives of our country ..."

On one of the last days of the conference national groups met consisting of delegates from the various countries. The representatives of the USSR, Poland and Hungary met on this occasion for a long discussion among themselves.

At the last plenary session the Hungarian delegate, Pastor Tot, summarized, on behalf of the East European Delegations, the general impression of the conference, namely that the participants knew very little about life in East European countries.

"On July 23rd, Mr. Shidkov ends his report, I preached the closing sermon (in English) at the Baptist service. This service was led by an English Baptist assisted by Baptist delegates from Sweden, Italy and the Cameroons. Prayer was offered by a delegate from Germany and a delegate from England. I said the final prayer in Russian. On July 25th I left for my fatherland full of enriching impressions."

Tenth Baptist World Congress

"Bratsky Vestnik" (No 5/6, 1960) publishes a report on the Tenth World Congress of the Baptist Church in Rio de Janeiro in June 1960. The report contains the following passage:

"An impressive ceremony at the congress was the 'flag procession' of the representatives from the various countries. The flags were carried by young Brazilian girls dressed in white, each accompanied by a representative of the country in question. The procession crossed the congress hall and mounted the steps to the platform where the officers of the conference and the members of the Executive Committee of the Baptist World Alliance were seated. The girls unfolded and lowered the flags for a moment while the delegates, each in his own language, repeated verses 9-11 of the Epistle to the Philippians: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. After this confession the girls placed the flags in their stands. The flags of the delegations from the USA and USSR were next to each other, as the procession was arranged according to alphabetical order. These two flags came at the end of the procession, first the American flag and then the flag of the USSR. All the flags were greeted with applause by the participants in honour of the country concerned. When the flag of the USSR was carried on to the platform, accompanied by our delegate A.I. Mitzkevitch, the whole hall applauded loudly. The Baptist delegation from the USSR was specially honoured by this applause and later received many expressions of goodwill from the participants."

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C H U R C H . N E W S : B U L G A R I A

Orthodox church life in Bulgaria

General situation

There are about 2,500 parishes in Bulgaria and about as many priests, but some city parishes have as many as 6 priests, so that in the country one priest might have to serve as many as five parishes.

The two former seminaries are now concentrated in a monastery at Tsherpitch near Vratza, 40 kilometres North of Sofia. The former Faculty of Theology at Sofia had been replaced by a Theological Academy.

The Patriarchate publishes a journal, calendars, etc. Sermons are usually preached only at Sunday liturgies, but many parishes have active "brotherhoods" (see below).

Parish priests in town earn about 1000 levas a month including state subsidy and fees. (Minimum costs of food, etc., would be about 400 levas: wages of workers 600 - 2000 levas).

Ancient churches in Sofia

St. George's originally part of the Roman Baths is in course of transformation into a museum.

St. Petka (underground) an historic church originally connected with a palace of the second Bulgaria Empire (about 1370), is much used for services of healing and confessions. It is served by 11 priests, seven of whom are on duty at once in the different chapels. The Cathedrals of Svelta Nedelia and St. Alexander Nevsky are in good repair and function as churches. St. Spas - most of this formerly large church was destroyed by allied bombs in 1944. There is a large chapel open in the remains decorated with realistic ikons of Bulgarian martyrs (mostly from Turkish times). The twelfth century Royal Church of Boyana, is now a museum. The frescoes are exceptionally fine - with a life which anticipates Giotto by a century. They are well-preserved and lighted and can be seen far better than before when the church was used for services. A new church has been built for the village.

Church attendance

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia holds up to 8,000 people. At Easter there are at least 40,000 in and around the Cathedral. People of all ages came and took their Easter candles home. Attendance is also high on Palm Sunday, "Orthodox Sunday", and other festivals.

The liturgy is celebrated daily in a few other churches; for instance at St. Spas the daily attendance is said to be 120 - 200 people.

"Brotherhoods"

Special lectures are given to so-called brotherhoods - groups of men and women interested in the different aspects of church life and teaching.

The brotherhoods were originally created by Orthodox laymen 35 years ago, but have become more active again recently. They flourish most in the town parishes and in the villages in some dioceses.

For instance in the Svelta Nedelia Cathedral in March 1961 lectures were given on "The armour of heaven", "Who is my neighbour?", "The Akathist hymn".

The brotherhood of the St. Spas Church has 700 members. They deliver notices of lectures to the members in their homes. Here on ordinary weeks there is an attendance of about 200, but on special occasions, when more people attend, they transfer to a larger hall connected with the Cathedral.

New churches

A number of new churches have been built or are being built in different places.

A revised translation of the Bible

Archbishop Joseph of Varna is heading a Commission which is preparing a revised Bulgarian translation of the Bible. The three principles are: to compare the best original texts, to correct errors of grammar and style, and to remove obsolete expressions. The work will take up to ten years.

In comparison with the USSR, in Bulgaria a vastly greater number of churches are open, but the Bulgarian Church is much poorer and it is said that economic difficulties discourage vocations to the priesthood.

The most hopeful sign in the church life of the country is that the overall total of communicants increases every year.

Monasteries

The great Rila (150 kilometres from Sofia) is headed by the Igumen, Bishop Varlaam. Like the other two "national" monasteries, Batchkovo and Troiana, Rila is extending its accommodation for visitors at the State's expense. Although its vast forests and sawmills have been nationalized, it still has quite a lot of agricultural land producing wine and vegetables lower down the valley. There are 35 monks in the monastery. Many thousands of people visit the monastery for a day or more in summer time. In Batchkovo there are 12 monks in the monastery and four elsewhere. Eight of the sixteen have completed theological studies. The monastery employs up to 40 people on its vineyards, orchards and cornlands. In the church as a whole about 10 percent of the monks have received higher theological education. The length of novitiate depends on the head of the monastery but is usually 1 to 3 years. The number of new entries has declined since 1950, but there is a higher proportion of well-educated postulants.

The Bulgarian monasteries are still able to support themselves on their agricultural properties and do not have to pay taxes on their harvest. There are 110 monasteries and convents in the country, very unevenly distributed between the dioceses, containing five to six hundred monks and nuns. Some nuns do weaving, embroidery and "cartonage" as well as agricultural work.

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C H U R C H N E W S : C Z E C H O S L O V A K I A

Session of the Board of the Ecumenical Council of Churches of Czechoslovakia

The Board of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia met recently in Prague. This was the first session in which Dr. I. Varga, Bishop of the Reformed Church in Slovakia, who had been elected chairman of the Ecumenical Council was in the chair. The session welcomed Mr. A.N. Stoyan of the Baptist Church in the USSR who is to work in Prague until June as one of the international secretaries of the All-Christian Peace Assembly.

The first item dealt with by the Board was the preparation of the Peace Conference of Churches in Czechoslovakia scheduled in Bratislava ... at the end of April in order to help Czechoslovak churches to prepare their contribution to the All-Christian Peace Assembly. The main paper at the conference was given by Dr. Hromádka, followed by another paper on the tasks of the Assembly, and a number of working groups are to discuss some of the outstanding problems of the All-Christian Peace Assembly. The discussion groups of the Bratislava Peace Conference consider the following problems:

1. Peace and freedom;
2. Peace and justice;
3. The cold war,
4. Peace and the contemporary situation in Christendom;
5. Peace and the problem of the two German States;
6. Peace service of the young;
7. Our relation to ecumenical movement;
8. The atomic means of destruction and disarmament;
9. Peace and the young nations;
10. Participation of churches in the general peace work in Czechoslovakia.

The Ecumenical Council took note of the delegates who are to take part in the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi on behalf of the churches in Czechoslovakia.

The Board also examined the reports on the work of the Study Commissions of the Ecumenical Council, namely the Commissions for Faith and Order, for the problems of peace, freedom and justice, for the problems of the cold war and for the study of materials prepared for the Third Assembly at New Delhi.

Ecumenism in the history of the church

A series of articles dealing with the problems of ecumenism in the history of the church was started in the interdenominational weekly "Kostnické Jiskry" after the new year. The authors try to make their readers acquainted with these problems which are of such outstanding importance in the church life of today when the encounters of Christians of various communions are ever more frequent.

The series started with the Old Testament. The unity of God's people on entering the promised land and in David's kingdom is mentioned in this connection and the outlook towards the future unity of the Messianic age (Ez. 37) is pointed out. The election, the Law and God's concern for the whole world are said to be the main ecumenical motifs of the Old Testament. This unity is not an end in itself. What matters is "a formation of service to the whole world, obedient and capable of action". In another article the New Testament motifs are discussed - the common Bible, common message, following of the same Lord, one Church. Then later groups and outstanding personalities are described: Jewish Christians, Montanism, Marcion. The series is to be continued until it reaches our times.

In the same weekly a series of articles dealing with the main themes of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi is published at the same time.

Communiqué issued by the Preparatory Committee
of the All-Christian Peace Assembly

In order to make preparations for the All-Christian Peace Assembly, the following committees and commissions met in Prague from the 24th to 27th January, 1961:

the Permanent Working Committee
the Continuation Committee of the Christian Peace Conference
the Commission for the Preparation of the All-Christian Peace Assembly
and the respective sub-commissions on theology, organisation and finance, and information, and the Committee of the Permanent Commission for the study of the Cold War.

In addition to previous members Bishop Nikodim, Director of the Foreign Office of the Moscow Patriarchate, for the first time took part in the sessions of the Working Committee, where necessary directives were given for the continuation and coordination of all the preparatory work. Especially it was decided that one main report and five supplementary addresses on the theme "On Earth Peace" should be delivered. The All-Christian Peace Assembly will be working in ten different commissions, each dealing with a special problem.

The All-Christian Peace Assembly will be opened by a divine service. In the closing ecumenical service as many churches (members of the Christian Peace Conference) are to take part as possible. In choosing the speakers special attention was paid to equal representation of all continents. The main report will be given by Prof. Dr. J.L. Hromadka, Dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty in Prague. This report has already been laid before the Working Committee for consideration. All proposals of the Working Committee have been approved by the Continuing Committee. Meanwhile a number of journeys to European countries, to Africa and China will be undertaken by members of the Christian Peace Conference.

Hymn-book for the Slovak Reformed Christians

The second edition of this hymn-book has been published by the Synodal Council of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia for the use of its members of the Slovak language. The first edition was published in 1956 after prolonged work thoroughly reshaping former hymn-books in the Slovak language. The present edition is a reprint with only a few minor changes. It contains all 150 psalms and 388 hymns. These hymns have been ordered in accordance with the divisions of the Heidelberg Catechism. "The biblical religion of our fathers in the faith is echoed in this hymn-book that includes hymns of the ancient church and of the Reformation period as well as more recent ones. In this way the Reformed Church in Slovakia is spiritually united with the Universal Church of Christ." The hymn-book is published in a fine format and good binding.

Bible reader for 1961

The Synodal Council of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia has published, as every year, a guide for Bible study. Beside parallel passages of selected chapters from the Old and the New Testament, the booklet contains a common programme of prayers for every day and selected quotations from Scripture referring to the parts of the church year. The Guide was published in the Slovak and Hungarian languages for believers of both nationalities who live in brotherly harmony together.

Year-book of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia for 1960

This year-book is a survey of the development and life of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia. "In the ten contributions of its outstanding priests and professors this church introduces itself as a living and growing body, loyal to the foundations of Orthodoxy and at the same time responding to the needs of our times".

Metropolitan John in his leading article discusses the 25 apocryphal books regarded as prohibited by the Orthodox Church. These are books dealing with the life of Christ and the apostles, mostly from the second to fourth century, rejected on account of their gnostic tendency.

Archpriest Dr. A.J. Novak contributes two articles dealing with the history of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia and with its theological output. The Orthodox Church traces its origin in our country back to Cyrill and Methodius (ninth century). Even after 1054 some Orthodox elements are said to have survived in Bohemia; Dr. Novak is of the opinion that the Hussite movement wanted to link up with Orthodoxy. In Slovakia the Orthodox Church was prohibited until 1649 when the union with Rome (the so-called Greek Catholic Church) was established. After the first World War the Orthodox Church was again organised in Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Bishop Gorazd. But only after 1945 really favourable conditions for development of the Orthodox Church were created. Archbishop Yeleveriy (Eleutherios) came to Czechoslovakia in 1946. Soon a number of eparchies (dioceses) were organised, particularly after 1950 when the "Uniates" in Slovakia returned to the Orthodox Church. In 1951 the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia was recognized as autocephalous.

H. Rosak discusses the problems of the historiography of the Church. He mentions the creation of a Document Commission that is to collect sources for history of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia. Prof. Dr. P. Kernasevic writes on the history of Orthodox theological education in our country. Already Methodius has founded a Christian Academy in Velehrad. After its extinction the Orthodox Church was not able to train its priests in our country again until 1948. A seminary was opened in Prague, and in 1950 the Orthodox Faculty was founded in Presov (Slovakia).

Two contributions (by Dean A. Michalov and Prof. S. Balogh) describe the important work of the Orthodox Church for peace. "They show how this work springs from the very essence of this church which is not a bellicose church. Because of that it is an inner necessity for it to work for peace". In this connection Dr. Balogh appreciates the results of the Christian Peace Conference.

Archpriest M. Scerbej gives information on the origin of the four eparchies of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia: Prague, Olomouc-Brno, Presov, Michalovce.

"In the Orthodox Church the laity also plays an important part". Archpriest B. Ales explains their role in church life. After discussing the biblical foundations of their work he points out various spheres in which laymen can serve in the Orthodox Church, and that mainly in divine services.

"The year-book is a valuable record of the historical development of Orthodoxy in our country. It is true that some statements would need further substantiation; for example it seems rather doubtful to us that Jerome of Prague was burned at the stake in Constance because he embraced Orthodoxy. All the same the year-book is to be welcomed as the first attempt to present an all-round account of the development of the Orthodox Church in our lands. The year-book is written in Russian, but all articles are accompanied by comprehensive summaries in English and German."

(Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia, Prague
No 1, 1961)

C H U R C H N E W S : ROUMANIA

From an interview with the Patriarch

Many conflicting accounts have appeared of what is happening to the monasteries and convents of the Roumanian Orthodox Church: according to some all the younger monks and nuns have been evicted: according to others the monasteries have been closed down altogether. An opportunity graciously offered by His Beatitude the Patriarch Justinian Marina to put questions on this subject was therefore welcomed.

His Beatitude said that action had been taken in accordance with the Laws governing the church which were formulated in 1953 but which had only been enforced in the last two years after a long period of warning. The government had conducted a vigorous campaign against idleness and illiteracy and it was impossible for the church to allow the monasteries to become asylums for those who would not respond. According to the regulations monks and nuns of any age can continue to live in the monasteries if they have completed theological studies at a seminary or if they have completed primary school education and done at least two years' study in one of the "choir schools" or theological schools for nuns attached to some of the monasteries. Those who have not these educational qualifications can continue in the monasteries if they are over 40 in the case of nuns and over 50 in the case of monks and have learnt and practised a useful trade.

New candidates have first to be approved by a bishop. Then if they are not seminarists they have to be sent to the monastic schools for the minimum general and theological education required and for training in a trade if necessary. Facilities for such education and training exist in the larger monasteries and there are two special theological schools attached to convents.

The Patriarch said that out of about 5000 monks and nuns, 2000 had been removed "because after repeated warnings they had refused to conform to the rules concerning literacy, theological study and daily work". Those who had been expelled had been taken back to their villages by the church's own transport, given clothes and some money, and helped as far as possible to find employment.

A number of very small monasteries or sketes had been closed in accordance with the policy of concentrating monks and nuns in larger centres where better facilities existed, and also because it was not considered good for the monastic life for very small units to be situated in the middle of villages. The chapels of these monasteries had often become village churches, but no church had been closed for worship.

The correspondent who had this interview with the Patriarch observed that the monasteries of Cernica and Caldarusan and the Psarea, Ciorogirla, Tsiganesti and Ghigheu convents in the neighbourhood of Bucharest are in excellent repair, great sums having been spent by the Patriarch on the repair of damage caused by the earthquake of 1940, bombing and fires. They contain at present 130 monks and 326 nuns. The figures given for Cernica were (monks) 60 today compared with 100 in 1950, and for Pasarea (nuns) 170 today compared with 240 in 1950. In all cases a fair proportion had been admitted during the past five years; there was a good number of younger nuns, several of whom had done advanced theological studies. All these institutions had sufficient land to support themselves (averaging one hectare per religious) and had also some kind of workshop. The nuns of Ciorogirla frame about 4000 reproductions of icons a month, those at Tsiganesti continue to operate five power looms which produce quantities of beautifully woven brocades for vestments.

Further church news

Theological education

The Theological Institute and Seminary are housed in a large building a quarter of a mile south of the Patriarchate and use the 18th century church in the square opposite as a chapel.

The library contains 60,000 volumes.

The Institute, which is the one institution for higher theological studies in Roumania, has 240 students doing a four year course plus 4 doing more advanced studies (Magistrul). The Seminary, which is one of five in the country has 122 students who enter at the age of 15 and do a five year course. The total number of seminarists is about 700.

Most of the seminarists do military service after completing their studies; most of those who come on to the Institute have already done their military service. In the third, fourth and fifth classes in the seminaries they study Greek and Latin and one modern language (French, English, German or Russian). In the Institute about two students a year take up Hebrew. The students for the Magistrul must produce a thesis of about 150 pages which is accepted by their professors as "worthy of publication" before they are admitted to the final examinations. The subjects of these are chosen by the professors and approved by the Patriarch. Selections from them are published in one or other of the two reviews "Studii Teologice" or "Ortodoxia". Two advanced students are studying at the Zagorsk Academy near Moscow and two at Sofia. One student from Finland is studying in Bucharest.

Printing office

The printing office of the Patriarchate is situated in the large courtyard behind the building which houses the offices of the church's own insurance and pension fund, a candle-making factory, etc. The press is on a very large scale, with eight modern presses, linotype machines, fully automatic folding and cutting machines, a large workshop for binding periodicals and books and rebinding old books, etc., and with about 100 employees in the workshops. The three monthly national reviews of the Patriarchate (Biserica Ortodoxa Romina, Studii Teologice and Ortodoxia) each have editions of about 10,000 copies so that every parish priest is supplied. A paper for the Patriarch's own archdiocese is also printed here. The other five archdioceses have printing presses which produce their own papers. They print large quantities of liturgical material for individual use, e.g. a very well-produced 32 page two colour text with music of the hymns and anthems of the Good Friday service for which they said they had an order for about 10,000 additional copies this year after printing 60,000 last year.

Workshops

In Bucharest there is a large workshop for silver and enamel work, banners, vestments and cassocks, etc. This is in the "Sketu Minchinal", the convent of the little mothers. A small but beautiful 18th century church in the middle has been completely restored and repainted and charming new buildings in Roumanian conventual style built round three sides of a well-kept garden. All is due to the initiative of the present Patriarch as is indicated by a large carved stone plaque. The buildings house a resident priest, an exhibition hall, and a number of workshops for making every kind of church vessel and ornament. There were very beautiful silver filigree work and enamelled encolpions and richly decorated mitres and all kinds of incense holders, altar lamps, etc. on show.

A monastery on the eastern outskirts of Bucharest is the centre for wood-carving, including many smaller objects and even complete ikonostases.

Relations with other cults

The principles are no mixing in one another's inner life, cooperation in meeting problems of common interest, e.g. "when Christians have to support the ethical interests of humanity" with regard to maintaining peace of "meeting the claims of peoples in accordance with Christian teaching".

Inter-confessional discussions are confined to questions of principle. There is said to be no quarrelling between the confessions and no proselytism. The Patriarch has the right to call meetings of 20-30 representatives of other religious bodies, including Jews and Moslems, whenever necessary, but the different religious bodies negotiated independently with the Ministry of Cults regarding their internal affairs. "Extremist sects", not recognized by the other churches, are not invited to take part in consultations with the Patriarch. Lutheran, Baptist and other Protestant students are admitted from time to time to the Theological Institute.

New translation of the Bible

A revision of the Roumanian translation of the Bible is being undertaken. It is not a retranslation but a revision of the translation first made in the 1930s. The text will probably be ready by 1962 (edition: 50,000 copies). In the liturgy itself the translation of 1914 will continue to be used.

The Archdiocese of Bucharest

In the Archdiocese of Bucharest there are about 1600 parishes and 2500 priests. Each parish had an official "council" of nine to twelve men which is the legal body, and a "committee" of 18 to 24 which includes a high proportion of women, and which is responsible for cleaning and maintaining the church, providing what is needed for the services, and for much "good Samaritan" work such as visiting the sick, providing burial for the poor and keeping the priests informed of the religious needs of individuals. The priests can visit the sick at home and in the hospitals during ordinary visiting hours.

Salaries

The basic salaries of priests and singers are paid by the State. The rates ranged from 1200 lei per month for a country priest (the same as a teacher in a primary rural school) to 1800 lei per month for a D.D. who had done 20 or more years of service. In addition priests receive freewill offerings (no fixed fees are charged). A priest in Bucharest aged 50 would have about 1600 lei per month as salary, plus a house. In spite of the housing shortage, by government decree most married priests with families have a whole house.

Repair of churches

The State gives large sums for the repair of churches which are historic monuments e.g. the Domnita Balacha Church (16th century) which is still under repair for earthquake damage. In all other churches the first responsibility lies with the parish council and priest who use the funds raised by the sale of candles, collecting boxes, etc. When big repairs are required the parish council appeals to the bishop. If the expense is very high an appeal is made to the Minister of Cults. No structural changes can be made to old churches without the permission of the Ministry of Arts as well as of the Ministry of Cults.

Building new churches

There is a considerable programme for building new churches. The process is that the believers in an area collect money. Then the Bishop's architect proposes a plan, and the diocese makes up the difference between what the parish can raise and the total required. The profits of the sale of candles, calendars, communion wine, publications, etc. are divided as to 3/4 to the parish and as to 1/4 to the Bishop's diocesan fund.

General impression

A visitor summarizes his impressions on church life in Roumania: I expressed my admiration for the quite astonishing amount of rebuilding and repair which we had seen on the visits hitherto, and asked how the Patriarchate had obtained the funds for such an extensive programme? The reply was that about 2/3 of the cost came from the Patriarchate's own funds and 1/3 from the government. Question: Why does a government based on a materialist philosophy support church building when there is no special historical or artistic interest? Answer: The Church pioneered and continues to give support to certain important aspects of the government's social programme, e.g. the campaign against illiteracy. The government knows that a great number of the people want the churches to be in good repair, etc., and is prepared to give subsidies in accordance with the numbers of believers. The Patriarch Justinian is a very remarkable man. Question: In other socialist countries there is official support for anti-religious exhibitions and propaganda, and for teaching materialism in the schools: What is the position in Roumania? Answer: There is freedom for religious propaganda and for anti-religious propaganda. "We teach Christian truth in the publications of the Patriarchate and the dioceses, through sermons and through catechisms in the churches. If the newspapers like to publish anti-Christian propaganda they are free to do so."

There are in Bucharest about 30 synagogues. They are crowded the Friday of Passover. The total number of Jews now in Roumania is said to be about a quarter of a million.

Roumanian Orthodox Church will send observers to New Delhi

His Beatitude Justinian Marina, Patriarch of the Roumanian Orthodox Church, has informed the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches that his church gladly accepts the invitation of the World Council of Churches to send an observer to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in November 1961.

His Beatitude told the Rev. Francis House, Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, who was making a short visit to Bucharest, that the Roumanian Church, which is not a member of the Council, was now taking a very great interest in the ecumenical movement. They had been very well informed about ecumenical developments by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially since the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at Rhodes in 1959, he said.

The Patriarch observed that the Roumanian Church had taken an active part in the ecumenical movement before the formation of the World Council and had acquired much experience of ecumenical meetings. The time had again come, he said, for the Roumanian Church to take an active share. There were now good possibilities of closer contact and rapprochement between the Roumanian Orthodox Church and both the World Council and the churches of the Anglican Communion.

Since 1958 the Journal of the Roumanian Patriarchate has published extensive news reports of ecumenical developments and extracts from the Report of the 1958 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. (The whole Report has been translated into Roumanian by Professor Vintula Popescu).

ATHEIST PROPAGANDA IN THE U.S.S.R.

True and false freedom of conscience

According to the last issue of the atheist periodical "Nauka i Religia" (No 12, 1960) this, says the article is the description of the "privileged position of religious communities in Soviet Russia as compared with the legal position of the churches in capitalist countries".

"Freedom of conscience and true democracy are wholly possible only in a socialist society. Yet it is of this that the USSR and with it all the countries of the socialist bloc are wrongly accused". Since the establishment of the Soviet regime and up to the present day the supporters of bourgeois democracy are convinced that there is no freedom of conscience in the USSR, that people are even persecuted because of their religious convictions, and that the Church and its servants are exposed to all kinds of petty annoyances.

"Proof - what for? From their point of view this is quite self-evident. As the present leaders of the USSR are godless, and as the atheist ideology is now paramount, it would be impossible to talk of freedom of conscience under each circumstances.

"According to capitalist logic, freedom of conscience exists only where doctrines advantageous to the bourgeoisie can be imposed on society. And what could be more advantageous for them than the religious ideology with which they deceive the people and make them accept their fate, while they await their heavenly reward for their patience and their submission?

"The education of man in the spirit of anti-scientific ideology is no violation of freedom of conscience, but freedom of conscience itself... "

In socialist countries, "Nauka i Religia" continues, there has been a general fall away from religion and this in a comparatively short period and despite the fact that religion has a tradition of thousands of years. But truth cannot be hammered into people's heads by force. It is sufficient to free them from the religious fog, to remove the religious blinkers and to open their eyes to reality. Everyone knows today that the only people who still believe are those who were influenced religiously as children and therefore continue to cling to ideas that are completely foreign to the nature of modern man. As these religious ideas are no longer being imposed on them, soon there will be no more believers.

In the capitalist world freedom of conscience is the freedom of choice between various faiths, but this also only in theory. In reality, this freedom of conscience is only a means of protecting the privileges of the dominant religious beliefs. This is the way in which bourgeois democracy is constituted.

In the USSR there is no ruling class which is interested in religion. Our State has renounced all religious obscurantism. It has nothing to hide from the workers because the interests of the workers are paramount for it. It does not need to call upon God's will to justify the aims and duties it has set itself. Therefore, contrary to the Capitalist State, the Socialist State has no need of the services of the church...

Here (in the Socialist States) the church has been put in its place for the first time in history. It is relieved of functions to which it has no right. For the church should concern itself only with its own affairs, that is with religious services. In socialist countries the church is in no way restrained or restricted in its freedom in exercising its own functions. This seems quite clear.

Nevertheless our slanderers will not keep silent. Today, when every unprejudiced person, including the priests, knows that the church in the USSR has every possibility to hold its religious services and to satisfy the religious needs of its members, the foreign press, especially the Vatican press, continues to sing the same old song. All measures for strengthening scientific-atheist propaganda are represented by them as a campaign against the church, as a restriction of the rights of the faithful and as a violation of freedom of conscience. Even the publishing of the magazine "Nauka i Religia" is called by the Roman Catholic Church an attempt to destroy religion, not only through atheist propaganda, but also (later) through bloodshed.

The Communist party clearly declares that its ideology is incompatible with religion and even that it is in contradiction with religion. But, the Communist party does not force its views upon anyone. It is true it has fought and is still fighting religious ideology today. It is, however, conducting this fight in accordance with Lenin's directives, only with spiritual weapons, without infringing the rights of believers or their beliefs.

Memo from a propagandist

Ten-year-old Zenia Moisseev had to take a long journey to Zagorsk, near Moscow, to fetch "holy water, oil for the lamps that burn in front of the icons, consecrated bread and a cloth with the imprint of the crucified Christ" from the Troitse-Sergieva Laura (monastery). She was helped by some "old women who feared God".

Sasha Turkin's father is a religious fanatic who reads aloud from the Bible to his little son, before he goes to sleep ... Sasha's teachers and school-mates have no contact with him, and when the time came for Sasha to join the Komsomol, he declared that he believed in God.

These cases, and others of a similar nature, roused the "Stankovit" labour brigade to write an open letter to the Minister of Education, asking him to give his opinion on the position of atheist propaganda in schools.

"Is Zenia Moisseev nothing but a member of his family? What is the school doing?" the labour brigade enquired. Their letter, and the Minister's reply, were both published in "Nauka i Religia".

They were also published in "Utshitel'skaia Gazeta" (no 125, 1960) at the request of Professor A. Ossipov (former Professor of Old Testament Theology at the Theological Seminary at Leningrad), who has been excommunicated from the Orthodox Church. Ossipov's final comment is as follows:

"I have taken the liberty of drawing the attention of the editors to the above considerations, in the hope that the matter will interest my fellow-teachers, especially those who are atheist propagandists. Perhaps it will be useful in future to inform one another more frequently than in the past, through the columns of 'Utshitel'skaia Gazeta', about interesting questions which are brought up in our political, scientific and pedagogic journals, and which merit careful consideration."

God as chief engineer

"God completed His creation, and then handed it over to man to continue it on His behalf. God uses men to complete His plan". These are the opening words of an article by the German physician and theologian, Friedrich Dessauer, quoted by "Komsomolskaia Prawda" (the organ of the Communist youth association, No 297, 1960). The article is entitled "God as chief engineer".

"Dessauer supports the theory that God's act of creation is still continuing, which is in accordance with the present-day theology of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Catholic theologians maintain that there is a divine plan for the development of science and technics ...

"During the first week of the creation God was at work Himself. Then He created man and handed the rest of the work over to him. What was achieved later in the sphere of science and technics, including the most recent discoveries, was 'of God', because all these achievements are merely the fulfilment of the lofty designs of God.

"It is therefore indispensable (the 'Holy Fathers' insist) to remind the workers and the engineers that God is always with us, in the mine-shaft, in the machine that we are controlling, in the plane in which we sit, etc.

"They trace this idea back to the Old Testament, the source of all obscurities and contradictions. On the one hand the Bible says that man was condemned to wearisome toil as an eternal punishment. 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread', said Jehovah to Adam, because he had disobeyed God's command...

"But, as everyone knows, all tools and technical implements, ranging from the primitive stone-axe to modern automatised industry, are means of reducing human labour, which is being taken over by machines. How can God still be promoting the development of science and production?

"From the very beginning man has acted independently, without expecting any help from God. This is confirmed by the biblical legends. As everyone knows, by her disobedience Eve forced God to alter His plans to a considerable extent. And further confusion arose when men built the Tower of Babel, which was not in accordance with God's plan either.

"But those are only legends.

"If we examine the historical development of science and production, we realise that it cannot possibly be an expression of God's plans, because it represents an unbroken series of defeats for religion." 'Komsomol'skaia Prawda' then gives the names of a whole list of famous thinkers and scientific discoverers: Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Keppler, Galileo, Huxley, Darwin, I.P. Pavlov, etc. "who have destroyed the myth of religion and the divinity of the soul once and for all time."

"The final blow to religion was dealt by the powerful teaching of Marx and Lenin, who taught mankind to understand the laws of social evolution.

"Today when scientific thought has become common property for the masses, when the Church no longer finds support, it is not easy for the 'Holy Fathers' ... They speculate on the fact that a few misguided scientists still believe in God, and on the ignorance of men. And they clutch at the theory of the 'continuous creation' like a drowning man to a straw.

"The leaders of religion assure us that God is the chief engineer of the universe, and that He is inspired with the desire to order everything for the best and to guarantee many great discoveries.

"But let us just examine how this chief engineer selects his workers. According to the Old Testament, He did not bestow the necessary talents on the good, God-fearing tribe of Sifa but (for some inexplicable reason) on the godless descendents of Cain, who murdered his own brother ...

"And what are we to think about the direct instruments of God's will, the churchmen and monks? For 2,000 years they have acted as if no 'divine scientific plan' existed. They were always the last people to accept any new invention (for instance the lightning-conductor, invented by Franklin) ...

"There have, indeed, been some exceptions, for instance some learned monks who studied scientific and technical problems. But God soon called them to order through the princes of the Church and the Inquisition. We know from mediaeval literature that the first robot in Europe was invented by a Catholic monk, Albert of Bohlstedt. The robot opened the door to visitors and let them in. This achievement (which was extraordinary for that time) was destroyed with his own hands by Thomas of Aquinas, the well-known Schoolman.

"Why is it necessary today to retain the predominant role of the spirit in modern technology? It is necessary in order to lug the old idea of God along, despite the new discoveries in science and technology, and thus to place science at the service of religion ...

"The theory of 'continuous creation' will not stand up to criticism. All attempts to explain technical and scientific progress as the fulfilment of God's plan, and so to sprinkle them with holy water, are in vain ... For nothing can prevent modern man from tackling his essential task, which is to struggle against all forms of social and spiritual oppression, to fight for freedom."

Pishcha Dukhovnaia, da ne bosh'a

"Intellectual food, not spiritual food" is the title of an article in the "Literaturnaia Gazeta", the organ of the Association of Soviet Authors (Moscow, 16th March, 1961). As the "Literaturnaia Gazeta" is one of the leading papers in the USSR, we quote the (abbreviated) text of this article below. It is signed by V. Gushev.

"For two years I have been travelling in the district of Kostroma (one of the oldest towns in Russia) in order to study its ancient culture, including the cultural efforts of the people today. In this way I have seen many things which made me thoughtful.

"The big village of Sidorovskoe on a Sunday morning. I am standing in the village square between the Communist club-house (which is firmly closed) and the charming church, which has recently been restored... an example of 18th century architecture. A curious medley of sounds reaches my ears: on the one hand a military march played by a loud-speaker on the roof of the club-house; on the other hand the church bells. It is Whit Sunday. The church-door stands wide open and the people are going in - old men with solemn expressions, old women with light-coloured kerchiefs on their heads, and girls in clean dresses...

"Then a group of young people appears, boys and girls in their best clothes, looking bored. They stop in front of the closed club-house, sit down on some steps covered with sunflower-seeds - and then go on again. Two of the girls slip away from the group. Perhaps they are tired of the aimless walk and want to go home. But in front of the church they stop, then with some giggling they decide to go up the steps and enter the church. I followed them inside.

"The girls were staring round-eyed at the brightly-coloured walls, at the icons decorated with embroidered kerchiefs, at the incense mounting up to the dome. The Whitsun liturgy was being celebrated, and the choir sang with uplifting fervour.

"The girls did not once cross themselves, nor did they follow the prayers with their lips. They simply stood there and stared and listened ..., until a fanatical-looking woman went up to them and whispered some explanations into their ears, pointing to an icon representing the Trinity.

"That is what happened in the church.

"What was going on in the club? It used to have two choirs which received a number of medals. It used to have a dramatic club which performed the comedies of Ostrovsky and anti-religious plays. That has all come to an end. The club-room is dirty and uncomfortable. It has no proper solo singer (Baian) and in winter it is so cold that you have to keep your scarf wrapped round your head. Some of the members of the choir have left and joined the church-choir instead.

"Soon afterwards I was in Angarsk and Bratsk (Siberia). With unconcealed joy I greeted the new settlers by saying, "How splendid that there is no church here. A new town without bells or crosses - marvellous!" It was a great satisfaction to visit the palace of culture in Angarsk, and the fine wood-carvings in the 'Komsomoletz' club-house of the young building-workers at the Bratsk power-station, where the young people amuse themselves in the evenings.

"In Padun a chauffeur told me the following funny story. One day a preacher appeared at Bratsk. The young building-workers made fun of him, put him in a car and drove him out into the Taiga (desert) singing loudly. The preacher was badly stung by midges; he managed to find his way to the nearest railway station, and was never seen in Bratsk again. Perhaps the young people went too far, but they were appalled at the preacher's proposal to build a church close to the new power-station. The song they sang, as they were seeing the preacher off in the car, ran as follows:

'We would rather spend our Sundays in the club-house than swallowing your lies with incense.'

"This little verse reminded me of the village of Sidorovskoie, where the local priest organised his own kind of 'artistic occupations' and influenced his parishioners through all the aesthetic pursuits at his disposal.

"Our anti-religious propaganda directs its appeal only to the future. We must patiently explain to people the laws of evolution in nature and society, and the harm that is done by church traditions. When exposing the errors of religious teaching we must at the same time energetically attack the different forms of aesthetic education. For it is a serious omission to under-estimate the emotional power generated by the services of the church. In our struggle for the souls of men, art is our strongest ally...

"My visit to the Maxim Gorky Sovkhose, in the newly-developed agricultural area of Tsheliabinsk, made an impression on me that I shall never forget ... A far greater surprise were the enormous corn-silos built of white stone, looking almost like churches, and the golden ears of the wheat-fields extending for miles and miles under the blue sky. You can see these fields from a tremendous distance, symbolising the farmer's life and toil. They are like beacons showing the way out of the town to the people who have come to help the Sovkhose to bring in their rich harvest.

"When I left the Sovkhose I could not get out of my mind this new world in the steppe, behind the Ural Mountains, where the only landmarks used to be the shining church-towers. And the thought occurred to me that very soon more and more towns, villages and settlements will be springing up, in which there are no churches. For the beauty of these new places will be derived from the temples of work, knowledge and art."

He proved to be a coward

Bachi-Iurt is a village in the foothills of the Caucasus, and its inhabitants are Chechenzy (one of the Caucasian tribes).

It was to this village that Shaapat, a young girl, returned recently from an orphanage to work in the village library and to prepare her medical studies. Being an inveterate bookworm, she could not tear herself away from the library. It was thanks to her that the number of people using the library increased every day. Until the day that Sheri M. Djamaluev, a young Chechenetz, came into her life.

This is the introduction with which a story entitled: "He proved to be a coward" was published in the central Russian Communist youth magazine "Komsomolskaia Prawda" (No 34, 1961).

Sheri, 1942, member of the Komsomol (the Communist youth association) became a member of the village library, and henceforth was one of its most regular visitors.

One day he said: "Shaapat, give me a love story." Shaapat gave him the first book she came across which was called "Consuela".

When Sheri brought the book back Shaapat found he had put a letter in it telling her about his love. "Love ... how many books have been written about love? Don't we know enough about love already? And yet love drowned Shaapat like a crystal-clear mountain spring, so that her young girl's heart stood still and she did not know whether to laugh or cry."

Sheri continued to put letters in every book he borrowed and it was not long till Shaapat realised that she, too, loved Sheri.

"Sheri, take me home after work, and we can discuss everything." When she said this, she saw how his eyes beseeched her, mutely and desperately, and she noticed in them his desire but also his fear to accept her proposition.

"I cannot take you home ..." his voice broke.

"Why not?"

"But you know, we Chechenzy are not accustomed to going out with girls."

"Nonsense", said Shaapat indignantly. "Let those who believe in Allah live according to that law, but we are both Komsomol members and should fight against such things."

"But Shaapat, I ..." he faltered and hung his head. "I am not free tonight ..."

At this moment Shaapat should have raised her head and looked him straight in the eyes. Then perhaps she would have understood that he was lying, that he hid his cowardice by a lie, that he was afraid to fight courageously against the dead hand of the past.

But she did not do so, "because she was in love". And so came the day when Sheri entered Shaapat's house accompanied by two strangers. He merely said: "My representatives". (Men who ask a girl directly or through her parents to accept their friend as her future husband.)

And again Shaapat felt happiness engulf her.

For a long time they sat together and discussed their future life and how henceforth they would join in honest toil and study ... "But you must realise, Shaapat", said Sheri, "that I belong to a very pious (Moslem) family. In order not to hurt their feelings we should do everything according to the old customs. Afterwards we shall go to the registrar. All right?"

Shaapat could not raise any objections because "there was not a better man in the whole world than Sheri".

According to Moslem custom Shaapat stayed for two weeks in the house of her new relatives. One day an old man walked up to her, stood silently in front of her as if saying a prayer, and then went away. The next Sunday Sheri came and took her to his home. "My brother Vissadi (the old man) has settled everything. Now we are husband and wife." "But we have not been to the registrar", Shaapat said, astonished. Behind her suddenly sounded Vissadi's voice: "Shame on you, woman. You have been wed by Allah. In the whole world there exists no stronger link between husband and wife."

When Sheri had to leave for Grosny two days later, to sit for his examination, his parting words to Shaapat were: "Try to get on well with Vissadi."

And thus Shaapat remained alone in Sheri's large family. Being the youngest, she had to do all the housework: fetch the water early in the morning (12 pails), whitewash the walls at night and toil in the kitchen garden after putting Vissadi's children to bed.

Once Shaapat came home late. "Where have you been?" "To the Komsomol meeting." "How can you, married woman, be so shameless as to meet with single men? Don't you know the laws? Just wait till Sheri comes home!" Shaapat wanted to retort that a new era had begun but she realised that they would not understand. "Never mind", she thought, "everything will be all right when Sheri comes home."

And when Sheri did come home, Shaapat told him about all the things with which his family had hurt her feelings, including the time that Vissadi had fetched her out of the village cinema in front of everybody because she, a woman of the Chechenzy tribe, was not allowed to go to the cinema, and anyway, because she was a woman, had to stay away from all public activities.

"Sheri, my love, I cannot go on living like this. Let us go away. Let us take rooms somewhere. I will work and we will manage somehow. Later we can send for mother. Sheri, why don't you say something?"

Sheri shook off her hand, turned away from her and said "You exaggerate. We are staying here. You are my wife and you belong in this house. Thank God there is enough women's work in the house. Neither Vissadi nor I would do that work."

Was that her Sheri talking thus? She looked into his eyes, only a moment because he immediately looked down, and she understood: They were the same eyes as that time in the library when Sheri refused to take her home.

"Sheri, why did you deceive me?" Tears welled into her eyes. She took her jacket from the wall and started to dress hurriedly.

"Sheri, if you love me you will come away with me now!"

When the door had shut behind her, Vissadi silently came into the room, put his hand on his younger brother's shoulder and said: "Cheer up, we shall find you a good, docile wife. To Shaapat we shall just send a letter divorcing her!"

After the divorce Shaapat stayed in the village. "Nothing changed in Bachi-Iurt. Only the light in the village library burned until late into the night."

My mistake

A young teacher, student at the Pedagogical Institute, was dismissed from her post by the headmaster of her school. In addition, she was publicly reprimanded at the Komsomol meeting.

What had happened? What had teacher E. Tambovzeva done wrong? She herself answers the question in the 1st April 1961 issue of the paper published by the Communist youth association "Komsomol'skaia Pravda".

She was doing her pedagogical practical work with third-form pupils of the 33rd school in Khabarovsk (Siberia) as part of her teacher's training. In her capacity as head of the form she also gave chemistry classes.

"It sometimes took me all night to prepare the classes. I had exhaustive discussions about my work with the most capable members of the teaching staff. I tried to learn as much as possible from them, so that my pupils would derive the maximum benefit from my efforts - till something happened that upset everything!

"One Saturday I took my form to the Arts Museum. The children gaped at the sea paintings by Aivasovsky, and the portraits of Jermack and Ivan the Terrible (the conquerors of Siberia). The girls admired the landscapes by Levitan and Shishkin. Then one girl said, looking at a painting of a church: 'Let us go to a real church.' That same day we went to a real church.

"The fact that a church is not only a relic of the past had escaped my attention, and therefore I had not said anything to the children. We visited the church as one goes into a museum.

"A religious service was being held when we entered. Bareheaded old men and women, and also younger women, stood praying. We also took off our caps and headscarves and stood silently for about twenty minutes. Then I felt that the children were unconsciously coming under the soothing spell of the religious atmosphere.

"At first I did not attach any particular significance to the event and soon I forgot it completely. In the school and the Pedagogical Institute, however, our escapade was viewed in an entirely different manner. The result? The above-mentioned disciplinary measures against the teacher.

"I was highly indignant at being thus treated. Why? Had I not gone to enormous trouble? Had my chemistry classes not been much appreciated? Had the children not become fond of me? Certainly, I had acted rashly. But was it just to discredit my entire pedagogical practical work because of this one mistake?

"All this happened four months ago.

"The hurt feeling has passed off. Now I understand that it was absolutely fair to give me a bad mark. It was not because I had made a mistake nor for my thoughtlessness, but because I had shown myself helpless on an essential issue. Why had I taken the children to a church? What could I expect to teach them there? Yes, I am a fine pedagogue!

"No, the mere facts of getting good marks, regularly attending Komsomol meetings and accomplishing one's public duties do not make one a good student or a good person. We never know in advance what dilemmas and tests life has in store for each of us. We should, on the contrary, be equipped to consider our every step, every action, from the Communist point of view. This is the lesson I learnt from the bad mark I received for my pedagogical practical work."

Atheist Propaganda in the Army

A two-day campaign to enlist active atheist propagandists was organised by the "Politupravlenie" (the political department), among the Soviet troops in Germany.

The new propagandists attend lectures on subjects such as "Ideological criticism of contemporary Orthodoxy", "The Catholic Church in the service of imperialist reaction", etc. Particular interest was aroused by the lectures given by I.F. Sherliakov, Director of the Planetarium in Moscow, on "The universe explained by science and by religion" and "The artificial satellites" (Sputniks). Those attending the courses pass on what they hear to the soldiers in the army.

"God's Soldiers"

"German militarism is raising its head again, thirsting for revenge and for atomic warfare ... In their religious ideas the militarists in Bonn are doing their utmost to prove that they are the incarnation of the principles of 'Holy Scripture' and representatives of true 'Christian democracy' ... Did not Dr. Adenauer tell the Pope in Rome, 'We are the last bulwark of Western civilisation against Eastern barbarism. The German soldiers are God's soldiers.' This idea (of Adenauer) differs from the Nazi theory only in its religious trimmings."

The above passage is taken from "Krasnaia Zvezda", the central organ of the Ministry of Defence in the USSR (No 10, 1961). It continues:

"Under the pretence of defending the Christian faith against the godless atheists, propaganda is hammered into the German soldiers that a tremendous clash is coming between Christians and atheists, a battle on a world-wide scale between the Western states (representing the cause of God) and the godless Communist bloc which is opposed to religion. For churchmen this ideological difference is the decisive factor for peaceful

co-existence. In their view the ideological conflict between 'Christendom' and Communism can only be solved by a trial of strength. By applying force they expect to turn back the clock of history, to bring the people in the Socialist states back into the bosom of the Christian Church, and in this way to harmonise peace on earth with religious appeasement.

"They say that war is an original phenomenon in human society, rooted not in the economic and political structure of imperialism but 'in the holy will of God'. It is therefore not possible for man to decide whether another war is to occur, or not ...

"they say that war is not contrary to Christian teaching, because it may be a just war which is pleasing to God.

"According to their cannibalistic ideas, it is even consonant with the divinely-created moral order to use atomic weapons against an aggressor, and therefore not a sin.

"Following the example of Jesus Christ, who gave up his life, the soldier must also sacrifice himself for the Christian religion and thus fulfil the will of God ... For God is on the side of the big battalions."

"Krasnaia Zvezda" states that in the West German army everyone has complete freedom to practise his own religious rites. "All the different rites have one thing in common: they all extol religion and attack Communism."

A new film about Dresden

A new film is being shown entitled "Five days and five nights". It depicts life in and around Dresden after the 8th May, 1945, when the city was occupied by the Russians.

A Russian soldier called Elim Kozlov discovers a little fair-haired German boy in a heap of ruins. "Heavens, is it possible? Where's your mother?" The boy doesn't understand.

Thus opens a film about comradeship between Germans and Russians, its main theme being the story of the Dresden art-gallery. The Russian soldiers' search for the lost art-treasures is not described as an adventure-hunt (on the lines of a sensational detective novel). It is rather a description in epic form of the friendship which grows up between two Russians (Leonov and Kozlov) and the German artist (Paul Naumann) and other Germans.

"At first Paul Naumann will not believe that for five days and five nights the leaders of the Russian army have organised a search for the missing pictures from the Dresden art-gallery, purely out of interest in their value as priceless works of art ..."

"Can a rough Russian soldier in a sweaty shirt be interested in the fate of a picture by Rembrandt or Raphael?" Paul Naumann asks himself. He cannot understand it, and when the Sixtine Madonna is rediscovered,

he is furious that Kozlov wants to place an armed guard in front of the picture. "Do you consider it natural", Naumann asked Nikitin (the Soviet captain who is an art-expert) that even the Madonna, who is the incarnation of eternal, all-forgiving love, was yesterday placed under the armed military protection of one of your soldiers? What a symbol of mankind today!"

"Kozlov is usually a self-controlled man of few words, but when he hears that, he breaks out: 'Only yesterday I looked at that picture ... only a dead picture, it's true. But the eyes, what eyes, they look deep into your soul and if they were dumbly saying: protect me, soldier!'"

"They reminded me of my own wife and daughter, who were put to death by the Germans because they had hidden some wounded Russian soldiers. I imagined them standing under the gallows and begging me to save them ... If I had been there, would you have commanded me to stand aside?' And turning to Nikitin he said, 'You explain to him, Captain; I placed a guard in front of the Sixtine Madonna yesterday, because all that was running through my mind.'"

"Krasnaia Zvezda" (Paper for Soviet Soldiers)

The Papacy is adapting itself

"First of all, will you please pay down the whole cost of your funeral in cash."/

"For my funeral?"

"Yes, Your Eminence. You have to pay in advance for the cost of the formalities which will have to be taken when arranging for the burial of the mortal remains of your sacred person, in accordance with your rank... You have become a Cardinal, and it is incumbent upon the Cardinals to make due arrangements to cover the ceremonies connected with their own funeral."

This strange conversation took place in the office of the financial administration and the pensions department attached to the Holy See in the Vatican City. One of the speakers was the papal Curator, an experienced man whose words carry authority on such matters. The other was an African wearing the red robe of a Cardinal.

An African? A negro? in the Vatican? is that possible? And actually wearing a Cardinal's robe? Everyone knows that the Catholic Church bestowed its blessing on the slave-traders, promoted slavery, and treated the negroes as an inferior race. But the times are changing. One can no longer refer to negroes as "the blacks". The Vatican is seriously worried: the Africans have resolutely started to eradicate the dirty traces of colonialism from their sunny continent. The Catholic missionaries came to Africa together with the colonists: the missionary was always hand in glove with the occupying colonist, murderer, soul-trader and plunderer. The inhabitants of Africa were confronted by them both together...

No wonder the Africans south of the Sahara say: "The white man appeared here Bible in hand and saw what a wealthy country we possessed. So he pushed the Bible into our hands, and took the land himself. Now we have the Bible, but the white people have our land..."

When the missionaries told them something about the Christian religion, the saints and the greedy devils, the Africans began to paint religious pictures of their own. They represented the saints as black people with good-humoured, thick lips, and the devils as white-faced with bright red ears.

The position of the European missionaries in Africa today has become extremely insecure. The Catholic paper, "La Croix", wrote: "Even if France and the other Western powers should be forced to give up their possessions in Africa, it must be possible for the Catholic Church to stay there, to dig in its roots and stand firm."

The Vatican (Literaturnaia Gazeta goes on to say) took urgent measures to strengthen its position in Africa. It began to recruit members of the higher clergy in Africa from among the inhabitants. During the process of this change-over to African leadership in the Church, the Vatican appointed a certain Bernard Gantin as Archbishop of Dahomé. He is the youngest of all the Catholic Archbishops alive today. He was placed in this high position because he is descended from a dynasty which used to rule in Dahomé, and which during the 19th century was still selling Africans to European buyers. This African plays no part in his people's movement for national freedom. It was just as easy for the Vatican to come to terms with him as it was for the slave-traders to come to terms with his grandfather and great-grandfather.

But Gantin was not the only one. One of the new Catholic dignitaries is an African negro, His Excellency Lorian Pugambva, who was made a Cardinal not long ago. Before that he was Bishop of Tanganyika. At the ceremony in the Vatican, Pope John XXIII placed a gold ring with a precious topaz on the black finger of the first African Cardinal in the history of the Catholic Church.

As soon as he had received them, the new Cardinal (who was deeply moved) was reminded of his earthly duties: he must contribute large sums to the papal funds, which he must raise from among his flock ...

The conversation between the new African Cardinal and the papal Curator about paying in advance for his own funeral was not a joke. It is a fact. One might say that if all the Cardinals have to pay for their own funerals, there is no reason why a black Cardinal should not do the same. But there is a difference. The white Cardinals are usually rich men who already possess the sum required; whereas Lorian Pugambva had to levy a collection among his flock in Africa with all speed, in order to pay for the honour of his appointment as Cardinal.

The Vatican is adapting itself. From now on the collections for Vatican funds will be levied in Africa by a dark-skinned Cardinal. He is allowed to keep a small fraction for himself. In return, however, he must obey the Pope's command and convince the Africans, that the Church has nothing in common with colonialism.

Come to our church - it's air-conditioned!

An article entitled "What keeps the minds of American youth in chains?" (published in "Voprosy Filosofii", Moscow, No 1, 1961) contains the following section with the heading, "Come to our church - it's air-conditioned!" The article is signed by L.N. Mitrochin after his visit to the USA.

Religion occupies an important place in the mentality of American youth. The American press has recently announced that the influence of religion is increasing there, in fact there is a fresh "religious boom" ... It would be wrong to attribute this solely to a spread in evangelism. There are factors in American life which can drive people to God.

The religiosity of the American people has its roots in the conditions of life there, and the growth of religion is closely connected with the breakdown of ideals due to the collapse of social ethics. Before leaving New York airport we had a chat with a group of young people. The question arose, why people come to believe in God. "The Bible contains sensible ethical commandments", said one girl, "which one doesn't find anywhere else. That's why I believe in God." C. Smith (of Omaha), E. Nestinger (theological student) and others agreed that the main attraction of the Christian faith was ethical. The constructive programme of the "Symposium on American Philosophy" is enlightening in this respect. "Christ is always with me, whatever I am doing", explains Postmaster D. Clover, who is recommended by the editors of the symposium as a representative of "satisfied America". Why? "I stick to religion and the church, because I want security for my capital."

So that's/ what it is! ...

Another contributor to the symposium writes on the same lines. "Religion is the source of strength and comfort, if business is not going well." In one of the largest churches in New York we read the phrase: "Faith in God is ultimately a matter of courage, the unshakable conviction that goodness, truth and love are the highest expressions of reality, and that if we have confidence in goodness, truth and love we shall not be betrayed nor deceived." So that is the social role of the Christian symbols, the opiate which helps people to bear their earthly difficulties and anxieties; genuine hope is replaced by the myth of a reward after death. Christianity teaches that everything comes from God. It is not so important how many dollars the Christian possesses. He can be poor and yet possess all things, because he is rich through Christ. However small his income is, therefore, he can feel rich. ("Daily Talks with God", Saint Louis, November-December, 1959, p. 8)

There is another reason, however, why Christianity is flourishing. "Many young people want to serve society and are filled with high ideals. That's why they are Christians." We heard statements of this kind again and again. Many worthy people are seriously concerned about the contradictions in present-day society in the USA, which is doing harm to millions of people. They are thirsting to apply their reforming-energy; and Christianity knows how to exploit this urge.

There are also other reasons, however, besides American conditions for the growth of religion. The well-organised machinery of evangelism is busy instilling texts from the Bible into the minds of young people. It is true, one is always being told that young people in the USA are absolutely free to decide for themselves about their relations with God. In actual fact, however, it requires considerable courage to resist the religious propaganda which is dished out not so much by the church as by the family and by the religious youth-groups, which are very strong...

The advocates of religion are very clever in exploiting the breakdown of personal ideals in daily life; they are creating "a special type of American religion and building air-conditioned churches." In the pamphlets on religious education distributed to parents it is impressed upon them that the knowledge and love of God are more important to the child than anything else, in order to lead a happy and successful life. Technical inventions are invoked in order to prove religious points: "Children who live in the age of the radio and the telephone have no difficulty in understanding that one can talk with someone whom one cannot see" ("Teaching Children to Pray in the Home", Philadelphia, p. 4). Material desires also play an important part: "If a little boy wants a bicycle, he can ask God to help him to find a way of raising the necessary money to buy one." Many similar examples are given.

Very popular are the Scout Associations which have about eight million members, both girls and boys.

In addition there are the various Christian youth associations such as the YMCA, and the YWCA, with over seven million members, and also a large number of religious organisations for school-children and students. All these organisations have marvellous sports equipment at their disposal - swimming-baths, summer and winter camps, etc. As there are no large non-religious youth organisations in the USA where children can take part in sports with others of their own age, unless a child joins a religious organisation he is left in complete solitude.

The Atheist's Guide

For a long time our propagandists have been waiting for a handbook to be published on the bases of scientific atheism. The need for it is obvious. The anti-religious books published before the war are out-of-date and have become merely of bibliographical interest. "The Atheist's Companion" ("Sputnik Ateista") which recently appeared is not bad, but does not contain much real information (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches", No 2, 1960)

This is the opening paragraph in a review of the latest novelty on the atheistic book-market entitled "The Atheist's Guide" ("Putevoditel' Ateista"), published in the popular atheist review "Nauka i Religia" (No 2, 1961). "The new book was prepared for the press in February this year by those responsible for the scientific-atheist contributions on the editorial staff of the State Press for Political Literature (Gospolitdat), with the title 'Bases of scientific atheism' (455 pages). It deals with all the most important questions on which atheist propagandists must be informed."

After a brief indication of the contents and arrangement of the different sections of the book, the review continues: "Atheist propaganda cannot be successful without a profound knowledge of the essential bases of religion, in order to be able to criticise its dogmas. All these questions are dealt with in detail, especially in the second part of the book, which describes the development of the different religions - under the influence of the social structure of the time - until the present day. The different religions - Judaism, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, the Christian sects in the USSR, Mohammedanism, Buddhism - are dealt with separately, in order to show how the relentless march of progress is forcing these religions to adapt themselves, and how they are succumbing one after the other"...

In the old Roman Empire the new initiates into the cult of Mithras were led by the priests up seven steps to the "Holy of Holies", where they found nothing but an empty room. In the same way today the critical analysis of all the religions leads inevitably to the conclusion that behind the altars of the religions there is nothing but a gaping void.

The last section on "The growth of Communism and the elimination of religious survivals" contains the official decisions of the Communist party concerning the church and religion. It stresses the direct connection between atheist education among the workers and the tasks undertaken by the party. It is emphasised that "religious ethics are contradictory to Communist ethics, because religious ethics justify all forms of oppression and the exploitation of man by man."

The most important feature of Communist ethics today, however, is the effort to find a creative solution to life's problems, a deep longing (Tiaga) for knowledge and culture. This is the finest quality in the best people of our time, but religion declares it to be sinful.

In the last resort, religion can be eradicated only by scientific propaganda, whose form and language are intelligible to everyone.

The new book is intended primarily for students and teachers in high schools and colleges. But its comparatively small size, and the popular form in which it is written, make it understandable also to the broad classes of propagandists and atheist agitators.

("Nauka i Religia", No 2, 1961)

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